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Contact: Gina Paige or Jamie Keehn, 608-422-7800 or dcfmedia@wisconsin.gov

Applications Open for Project Growth Grants

New grant program aims to build relationships between early care and business communities

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) opened applications today for Project Growth, a \$20 million grant program designed to help solve the challenges facing Wisconsin's child care system and bolster the state's economy.

"Strengthening Wisconsin's child care system is critical to supporting families and boosting our economy," said DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson. "When parents can't find care that meets their family's needs, they are unable to remain in the workforce. By bringing together businesses and child care programs, we can begin to build strong, sustainable partnerships that benefit everyone."

Project Growth is offering two unique grants aimed at making high-quality, affordable child care more accessible and sustainable across Wisconsin.

The [**Partner Up!**](#) grant program focuses on supporting partnerships between businesses and child care providers by offering funding to businesses who purchase slots at existing regulated child care providers. Funding under this program will be awarded based on existing community child care needs throughout Wisconsin.

The [**Dream Up! Child Care Supply-Building**](#) grant program focuses on building child care supply through a collaborative community approach. Funding under this program will be awarded to 30 communities around the state to help create new child care businesses and enhance existing providers through expansion, new programs, and other offerings.

Businesses are encouraged to apply for Partner Up! grants, while child care providers, community organizations, businesses, and local government agencies or school districts are encouraged to apply for the Dream Up! grants. Applications for both grants are open through April 4, 2022, and available on DCF's [**Project Growth**](#) page.

To help design a grant program that meets the needs of Wisconsin employers and communities, DCF, surveyed nearly 1,000 employers from every county in the state, across a wide range of industries. The [**results**](#) highlighted the importance of child care to the state's economy and workforce with 73% of respondents agreeing that providing employees with resources to support their child care needs is a strategy that all employers should consider to address workforce/labor shortages. However, many respondents cited barriers in providing such benefits, with a majority stating federal or state government incentives would increase the likelihood that their company could implement or expand child care resources.

Project Growth is primarily funded through the state's [**\\$30 million**](#) Preschool Development Grant – Birth to 5 (PDG B-5) award, which is designed to provide states with the funding necessary to

plan changes to their early care and education systems. To increase program capacity, DCF is also using federal funding from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act.

To learn more about DCF, visit www.dcf.wisconsin.gov and follow @WisDCF on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

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